

## EURIPIDES' *THYESTES*, FR. 394.

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### RESUMEN

Este artículo contiene nuevas consideraciones sobre la *constitutio textus* del fr. 394 de Eurípides, que consiste en un verso de una obra perdida titulada *Tiestes*. Testigos del fragmento son el llamado *Florilegium Laurentianum*, una antología conservada en un manuscrito del siglo XIV, y la compilación de sentencias conocida como *Melissa*, atribuida al monje ficticio Antonio y probablemente compilada hacia el siglo XI. Las dos fuentes se complementan, ya que el *Laurentianum* atestigua la cita junto con los nombres del autor y de la obra, ambos ausentes en la *Melissa*, pero al mismo tiempo le falta una partícula al inicio de la cita, que se conserva en la *Melissa*. Un análisis del texto y de sus fuentes lleva a la conclusión de que se necesitan correcciones en las principales ediciones existentes del fragmento (Nauck 1856, 1889, Jouan-Van Looy 2000, Kannicht 2004 y Collard-Cropp 2008). El artículo continúa sugiriendo una reconstrucción de la dinámica de la tradición del fragmento dentro del *Florilegium Laurentianum* para determinar cómo y cuándo el manuscrito perdió parte de su texto. Haciendo referencia a la práctica de la rubricación en los manuscritos medievales, se reconstruye el estado del texto de la cita en el manuscrito que fue modelo del *Laurentianum*. El artículo finaliza con una sugerencia de edición del fragmento.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Eurípides, *Tiestes*, edición, manuscrito, crítica textual.

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## ABSTRACT

This article contains new considerations on the *constitutio textus* of Euripides' fr. 394, consisting in one line from a lost play titled *Thyestes*. The fragment is witnessed by the so-called *Florilegium Laurentianum*, an anthology preserved in a 14<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript, and by the compilation of *sententiae* known as *Melissa*, attributed to the fictitious monk Antonius and probably compiled around the 11<sup>th</sup> century. The two sources complement one another, as the *Laurentianum* witnesses the quotation together with the names of author and play, both absent in the *Melissa*, but at the same time it lacks one particle at the beginning of the quotation, which is preserved in the *Melissa*. An analysis of the text and of its sources leads to the conclusion that improvements to the main extant editions of the fragment (Nauck 1856, 1889, Jouan-Van Looy 2000, Kannicht 2004 and Collard-Cropp 2008) are needed. The article goes on to suggest a reconstruction of the dynamics of the fragment's tradition within the *Florilegium Laurentianum* in order to determine how and when the manuscript lost part of its text. By referring to the practice of rubrication in Medieval manuscripts, the state of the quotation's text in the *Laurentianum*'s exemplar is reconstructed. The article ends with a suggestion of an improved edition of the fragment.

## KEYWORDS

Euripides, *Thyestes*, edition, manuscript, textual criticism.

In this contribution, I argue that all extant editions of Euripides' fragment 394<sup>1</sup> require improvement. Secondly, I suggest a reconstruction of the dynamics of the fragment's tradition in one of its witnesses in order to determine how and when this manuscript lost part of its text. Finally, I present my revised edition of the fragment.

### THE TEXT, ITS SOURCES AND THE PROBLEMS WITH EXISTING EDITIONS

The fragment consists of one iambic trimeter from Euripides' *Thyestes*. It contains a declaration of pragmatism by an unknown character. The text, as published by R. Kannicht<sup>2</sup>, is as follows:

<οὐ> πώποτ' ἔργου μᾶλλον εἰλόμην λόγους  
I have never chosen words over actions.<sup>3</sup>

The line has two witnesses: the so-called *Florilegium Laurentianum*, an anthology – preserved in a 14<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript (Laur. Plut. 8.22, ff. 74<sup>r</sup>-189<sup>v</sup>) – derived in part from Stobaeus, and the compilation of *sententiae* known as *Melissa*, attributed to the fictitious monk Antonius and probably compiled around the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. Only the former has a *lemma*, i.e., an indication of the author's name and of the work's title (Εὐριπίδου Θυέστη).

That the *Laurentianum*'s chapter containing the Euripidean quotation derives from Stobaeus is confirmed by the presence of its title in the list of chapters of the original anthology witnessed by Photius, where it features as book II, chapter 15<sup>5</sup>. The Stobaeian derivation was confirmed by T. Dorandi<sup>6</sup>.

In the *Laurentianum*, the quotation can be found on f. 99<sup>v</sup>, l. 30, and it reads πώποτ' ἔργου μᾶλλον εἰλόμην λόγους<sup>7</sup>. Antonius' text, on the other hand, is οὐ πώποτ' ἔργου μᾶλλον εἰλόμην λόγους<sup>8</sup>. For metrical and semantic reasons, it is certain that πώποτ' was preceded, in Euripides, by οὐ.

Kannicht's choice to write οὐ between angle brackets, as though unattested by the sources, should in my view be reconsidered. In his apparatus, Kannicht ascribes to Antonius a form οὐπώποτ', with negative particle and adverb merged, which could be the reason why he considered the separate οὐ to be conjectural, though based on Antonius: if the *Melissa*'s text

1 Nauck (1856; 1889), Jouan-Van Looy (2000), Kannicht (2004), Collard-Cropp (2008).

2 Kannicht (2004: 439).

3 All translations are my own.

4 Cf. Baldi (2014).

5 Phot. Bibl. p. 113a17 Bekker.

6 Dorandi (2020: 68-78).

7 ed. Wachsmuth (1884: 2, 188, 9).

8 ed. Migne (1865: 929 D).

read οὐώποτ', then the particle would not be attested as an independent word. Even then, though, Kannicht would be offering a conjecture to improve existing text (the separation of οὐώποτ'), rather than an addition, as the use of angle brackets suggests.

Even more important, however, is the fact that both Gesner's<sup>9</sup> and Migne's edition of the *Melissa*, which Kannicht quotes as printing οὐώποτ', actually present οὐ separated from ώποτ'. Naturally, the practice of *scriptio continua* in manuscripts makes the difference between οὐώποτ' and οὐ ώποτ' an editorial choice, but the fact that οὐ appears separated in the *editio princeps* of Antonius (Gesner), as well as in the main reference edition (Migne), makes a case for considering the independent particle a *lectio tradita* in Antonius' text – at least for those who are not working on an edition of the *Melissa*, but of a text quoted in it.

Wachsmuth was certainly right to print οὐ between angle brackets in his edition of Stobaeus, as the particle is indeed absent from the anthology's *paradosis*. For the purposes of an edition of Euripides' fragment, though, one should consider Antonius as a legitimate source, since – though he does not mention the author – there is no doubt that he is quoting the same passage as the *Laurentianum*. The fact that one of the fragment's two sources has the negative particle means that this is not a conjecture, but a *lectio tradita* for Euripides as well. Therefore, an edition of Euripides' fragments should print the particle without brackets.

Nauck's first edition of the tragic fragments, which only considers the *Laurentianum* as a source for this quotation, writes the negative particle between angle brackets, to signal an editor's addition, specifically the one by Gaisford in his edition of Stobaeus<sup>10</sup>. By ignoring Antonius, Nauck presents an incomplete edition of the fragment, as do Collard and Cropp, who also fail to mention the *Melissa*.

In his second edition, Nauck writes οὐ without brackets, but his source list is limited to the *Laurentianum*. He does mention Antonius in the apparatus, but only as the witness for the initial particle, rather than as a legitimate source for the whole fragment. The same choice is made by Jouan-Van Looy. While I do agree with the *constitutio textus* of both Nauck's second edition and Jouan-Van Looy, the way they present their sources is not equally flawless: rather than pointing out, as they do, that the Stobaeian witness omits the negative particle, which is supplied by Antonius, an edition of the fragment should – as I argued – include Antonius in the source list.

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<sup>9</sup> Gesner (1546: 54).

<sup>10</sup> Gaisford (1824: 382).

### A GAME OF SCRIBES AND RUBRICATORES

I argue that οὐ was present in the *Laurentianum*'s exemplar. My argument comes from the *Laurentianum*'s page layout, and is rooted in the fact that the manuscript presents rubrication of the initials both of the author's names and of the quotations. The apparatus of Wachsmuth's edition of Stobaeus signals many errors committed by the scribe and by the *rubricator*: these are easily noticeable by looking at the high-quality images of the manuscript available on the Laurenziana's website<sup>11</sup>.

The *lemma* Εὐριπίδου Θυέστη, which has Εὐ- regularly written by the *rubricator* and immediately precedes the text of our fragment, is at the very end of line 29. It seems likely, then, that the scribe, though rightfully omitting the initial οὐ for rubrication, forgot to leave a blank space at the beginning of the next line to signal where the rubricated οὐ should go. The momentary interruption of the scribal work to move from one line to the next probably contributed to his distraction.

It is the rule in this manuscript that the scribe should leave the copying of all quotation-beginnings to the *rubricator*; therefore, if we supposed that οὐ was already absent from the exemplar and that the scribe made no mistake, we should expect the scribe to have written the quotation starting from -ποτ', as the first syllable would then have been πω-, and it would have been the *rubricator*'s job to fill that in later. Since the scribe began his quotation with πω-, then this must have been the second syllable in the exemplar, preceded by οὐ.

Another factor which contributed to the mistake is that, be it another error on the scribe's part or something that occurred in a previous stage of the text's tradition, the next quotation in the manuscript (Stob. 2, 15, 18 = 2, 188, 11 Wachsmuth) does not have a *lemma*: all we have is the unknown poet's text (τῷ λόγῳ μὲν εὖ διέρχῃ πάντα, τῷ δ' ἔργῳ κακῶς: "in words you can easily pass through all kinds of things, in fact it is hard"), preceded by a blank space, in which the *rubricator* has written an article ὁ that makes no sense in the context.

What I suggest, therefore, is that once the scribe had failed to leave a blank space for the start of the quotation from Euripides and to write the name of the next quotation's author, the *rubricator* found only two gaps to fill in: one for an author's initials before the first quotation, one before the beginning of the second quotation. One gap for an author, followed by one gap for a quotation. All the *rubricator* did was fill in the gaps he had been given. Euripides' name was an easy guess, since the scribe had already written most of it. As for the ὁ in the second quotation, we can explain it as a guess of the *rubricator*'s, based on the fact that an article in the initial position is certainly common, although it is clearly pointless here. This is no isolated case: the *rubricator* regularly inserted articles which made no sense at all in their contexts. For

11 <https://tecabml.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/plutei/id/61239/rec/1> (f. 99<sup>v</sup>).

instance, the quotation preceding our fragment (Stob. 2, 15, 16 = 2, 188, 6 Wachsmuth) is a passage from Sophocles' *Electra* (624-625):

Σύ τοι λέγεις νιν, οὐκ ἐγώ· σὺ γὰρ ποιεῖς  
τοῦργον, τὰ δ' ἔργα τοὺς λόγους εὕρίσκεται

You say this, not I: you do the deed, and deeds find their own words.

Here the *Laurentianum* scribe left a blank space before τοῦργον, as he usually did to signal a line break in the original, but the *rubricator* mistook this for a new entry and entered the article Ἡ, which means nothing in this context and can be nothing but a wild guess.

In conclusion, my argument makes a case for placing the fall of the initial οὐ in the context of the copying of the *Florilegium Laurentianum* manuscript, but not earlier. Just as much as the text has been preserved intact in Antonius, so it must have been safe and sound as far as the *Laurentianum*'s exemplar.

#### AN IMPROVED EDITION

Based on my previous arguments, I suggest the following edition<sup>12</sup>:

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οὐ πρόποτ' ἔργου μᾶλλον εἰλόμην λόγους

Stob. 2, 15, 17 (2, 188, 9 Wachsmuth) Εὐριπίδου Θυέστη (L)· 'πρόποτ' - λόγους' | sine lemmate  
Antonius Melissa 1, 48 (136, 929 D Migne) 'οὐ - λόγους'.

οὐ om. L pro rubr.

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<sup>12</sup> I present this edition, along with the arguments that brought me to it and an interpretation of the fragment, in Suaria 2025, pp. 102-104.

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